

COMMUNICATIONS.

A CONTRADICTION.

As a writer from the old country, I am not a Canadian with regard to political bearings, but I am a Canadian in spirit. I have recently undertaken to enlighten the public on the general sentiment of our country—through the medium of the press—must be an advanced one. Personally I have all tolerance, every shade of opinion honestly expressed by any man upon any subject, even strongly such opinion may be opposed to my own. This tolerance, however, does not extend to statements, especially when intended for publication—by a man desirous of earning his personal views down the public road, when as in this case they contain the substance of the false, the inaccurate, the expressions of opinion so stated as to be for ascertained facts, although supported by the proofs necessary to enable them to rank as such. As I can expect space to attempt an exhaustive criticism of the remarks attributed to Mr. Mackenzie by the reporters, I will select a few. To begin with, the accusation of cowardice brought by him against the Police at Duck Lake fight—may be disposed of by the observation that the contents of an address presented to Major Crozier and his men by the volunteers present on that occasion, directly and emphatically contradicted the assertion of Mr. Mackenzie, who was near the place. As a specimen of his inaccuracies, may be noted his statement that the volunteers lost nine killed and five wounded, while the Police had only three hit, two of whom we find him afterwards connecting starting to have been killed. As a matter of fact the police lost three killed and had six wounded, against the volunteer loss of nine killed and five wounded. These inaccuracies are all ascribable as having the one bias, and we may correct two more. When Lieut. O'Brien took the second detachment of volunteers to Carlton, instead of there being as he states—only twenty-five men in the settlement, there were thirty-seven good rifles in the M. Mission proper and twenty-five at Goshen—exclusive of those in the hands of the police left there. Again, instead of asserting that all volunteers accompanied Thomas Crozier to Duck Lake, he should have said fifteen police and eight volunteers, because the police having taken possession of the stockade and buildings erected there in it for the accommodation of the volunteer soldiers, the few who seem to have been present there, find it convenient to forget that the work was done at the command of the Government, and the fort subsequently under the commandant's orders; that there were no other barriers, absolutely essential to utilizing a military force for purposes of defence; that the intention was to gather the women and children there only in case of an attack; and that after their experience was some confinement time during the war, nothing short of the actual presence of the enemy would have tempted more than one or two of them to return. While it must be encouraging to the body of the police to learn that not withstanding his opinion of their conduct at Duck Lake, were all their officers—always excepting Major Dan and Inspector White Fraser—exchanged for competent ones, Mr. Mackenzie would not have been so ready to make a respectable band—be so obtuse as to fail to see the mixture of the ludicrous with the violent in the implied criticism of the other officers by a man so grossly ignorant of all pertaining to a military body—perhaps excepting the shooting it—as to be unable to distinguish between a major and a sergeant-major. Let us turn to the further aspects of what the Patrick Moore mentioned as having gone about offering to secure homestead patents for \$50 each and as having been finally removed out of the settlement, was at one time the junior. The complexion of the matter, when the truth is substituted for Mr. Mackenzie's version, becomes very different. When Moore was accused of the conduct attributed to him the charge was promptly reported to the Government, in consequence of which he was lawfully suspended, pending an investigation; but before that could be completed a number of the deeply aggrieved settlers signed a petition to the Government for his reinstatement, professing the belief that he was the victim of a conspiracy, and probably it was in consequence of this action on their part that Moore instead of being run out, as suggested, left at his own time to take an

appointment elsewhere. While not enamored of the present full application of the timber dues, I would like to have Mr. Mackenzie's statement of figures necessary to inspire credence in his assertion that hardly enough is collected from them to pay the salary of one inspector; furthermore, a single authenticated instance of the many cases in which to his knowledge farmers have had their whole supply of wood seized, and it occurs to me to ask why—if so anxious to live under the same customs and organizations as wisdom in the east—he objects to paying timber dues? Perhaps the most deliberate falsehood of all is that rails are taxed fifty instead of twenty cents per hundred. With regard to location of public offices, had the Government after—as was eventually done—the matter with regard to the telegraph office had been clearly represented to the proper department—upheld the arbitrary action of its official, one could understand blame attaching to it, but we all know that such was not the case. As to locating the post-office in the town—in view of the distance between here and Ottawa and the fact that the petition to place it on the mission was immediately followed by one to put it at Goshen—the Government may be pardoned if the leaving it where it was seemed the best way to settle the conflicting claims. In any case, it now stands in the Mission. Much the same may be said about the choice of a site for the proposed court house. Nor is it easy to see how the Government could have improved upon the adopted course of leaving the decision to Judge Robson, who in addition to being on the spot, was most likely to know best what situation would best suit the court over which he presides. Lastly, with regard to those responsible for Riel's invitation here, either Mr. Mackenzie or his reporter seem slightly mixed. I am not aware that those alluded to as Government supporters, at any rate here, accuse any number of dissatisfied white settlers of having invited Mr. Riel into the country. They justly accuse a small number of having supported him from first to last after his arrival, and a larger number of having invited him to hold and address a meeting in this town, and while I do not hesitate to express disapproval of such gratification of a curiosity—in itself not unnatural—I draw a wide distinction between men who having gone once came away disgusted, and others who like Mr. Mackenzie drove miles away from town to one meeting and within a few days attended another in the town, if they did not get up the second one. Mr. Mackenzie goes further than Government supporters with regard to the whites who countenanced Riel. They say those men might and ought to have foreseen the rebellion. He declares that they actually did foresee it since last fall. Certainly he ought to know better than I, but yet I don't believe that were all as bad as that makes them out. In closing I would venture to remind Mr. Mackenzie that what truth may be contained in his statements will receive little credit when it has to be sifted out from so much either inexact or false, and that in adopting a line, which might easily have been subjected to far more severe criticism than is herein contained, he weakens and discourages the earnest efforts of those who are striving quietly to effect such radical changes as we all know to be necessary. May I venture, without being guilty of a personality to Mr. Mackenzie as a shoemaker, to quote the words of a venerable author, worthy of attention if only from their antiquity, *in utero ultra crepidam*, which translated contains the advice "Let a cobbler stick to his last." Yours, etc.,

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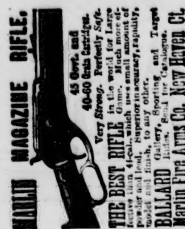
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THE REBELLION.

(CONTINUED FROM OUR LAST.)

The volunteers departed, the defence committee assembled and while naturally enough all felt that prompt measures must be taken, it was not easy to decide as to what they should be. It was finally decided that while in case of actual attack Inspector Moffatt should take command of the whole defence, he would meantime remain at Groschen and let Lt.-Col. Sprout command the volunteer force in the town proper. It was agreed to fortify some buildings and there to collect all stores of ammunition, as well as a quantity of other kinds—the choice of a house for this purpose being deferred. The Presbyterian Church and manse were afterwards selected. Meanwhile the enrolled men had been assembled, and were divided into companies and told to choose their officers. This was done as usually happens in a crowd—with no regard to possession of technical requirements for the position, at any rate in the case of some chosen—but on the other hand principal of putting favorites in command. The result became most ludicrously apparent when the attempt to drill the men began. The volunteers who had departed, as has been said, in excellent spirits, reached Carlton between 10 and 11 o'clock at night, having experienced no serious on the road. While they were being made as comfortable as the means of Major Crozier's command allowed of, Mr. Thomas McKay was getting ready to start off again, his new destination being Batocoe. Mr. Hilliard Mitchell, J. P. of Duck Lake, who after having for long attended to the interests of Stobard, Eden & Co., at that post, had lately been carrying on business there on his own account, in the course of which he had made more or less intimate acquaintance with all the half-breeds of St. Laurent, went over to the French settlement, when the news of the outbreak reached him, to try what his influence could do towards bringing the people to their senses, and to attempt at any rate to procure the release of the prisoners already seized. Although unsuccessful with regard to obtaining the release of the Government officials, he managed, by pointing out to Riel, the hostility which would be engendered towards him in Prince Albert should he persist in holding the two men belonging to that settlement, to effect the liberation of Walters and of Hannan, who lost no time in making the nearest possible approach to a calm's direct course here. Luckily for them Riel did not then know the very decided attitude towards his movement adopted by the English speaking settlers. Having succeeded to this extent Mr. Mitchell, anxious to do all in his power to preserve the peace, agreed to carry a message from Riel to Fort Carlton, demanding an interview with Major Crozier, and was when the volunteers arrived, on the point of starting back with the Major's answer to the effect that he would meet Riel at a point half way between the Fort and Batocoe, and would go either unattended or with an escort, as might be agreed upon. Thomas McKay, although fully warned and conscious of the risk he ran in doing so, determined to accompany Mr. Mitchell, entertaining strong hopes that his personal influence with the French and his ability to disabuse their minds of the false hope they cherished of receiving assistance from the English half-breeds, would induce them to a more reasonable course. He was determined at any rate that the chance should not be lost through any shrinking of personal danger to himself and justice requires the devotion of a few lines to that gentleman's position with regard to the interests of his fellow settlers generally. Mr. Thomas McKay is one of the seven sons of Mr. William McKay, who died a year ago last December at Fort Pitt, after a long life spent in the service of the Hudson Bay Company, during which he had gained the affection and esteem of all who knew him. Of all the seven brothers there is not one false to do credit to his father, while Mr. Thomas McKay, with whom the narrative at present is commenced, by his many excellent qualities, moral as well as mental, enables all who like himself are more or less nearly connected with the aborigines by ties of consanguinity. To a kindly, frank and genial nature, invariably the same, he adds a cheerful gentlemanly manner, while his breadth of view, extent of information on most topics, and capacity for business attainments those who know what all quite recently have been the condition of the country in

which he has been brought up and so far passed his life. These qualities added to his intimate acquaintance with the resources and requirements of this country, as well as with all classes of its inhabitants would make his services invaluable in the public position which he is sure to sooner or later occupy, unless he should unfortunately succeed in what he so laboriously strives to do—viz., in "hiding his light under a bushel." Had the metis listened to his advice given to them long ago their position to-day would have been a far more enviable one. McKay and Mitchell proceeded directly to the post of the latter gentleman at Duck Lake where they refreshed themselves and horses. Here they met the two Arcands, who were waiting Mitchell's return, and accompanied by whom, they reached Batocoe at about 9 a. m. and were conducted to a little house near the church where they found Riel surrounded by his council. Mr. McKay, who had never met Riel before, was introduced to him as "one of Her Majesty's soldiers." Learning that he had come at Mr. Mitchell's invitation the noble, not having so had his amiable temper ruffled, declared him equally entitled to safe conduct, a promise which he very shortly showed ever inclination to disregard. Mr. McKay proceeded to say that his object in coming there was to explain to such of his old acquaintances which he brought with him to the position into which they were putting themselves by taking up arms against the Government that although the ring leaders who had instigated them to the excesses already committed must and would be punished yet it was not too late for them as a whole to recede, and that by quietly proceeding to disperse and return to their homes they would escape the consequences which must otherwise inevitably ensue, when the government forces in whatever the number required might be, had come and crushed them. This it is hardly necessary to say infuriated Riel, who then, according to his invariable custom when crossed or worried in argument, discarded the beautifully polished and insinuating manner, no doubt acquired to a great extent in wheeling whiskey out of the wholesale dealers on the credit system, the payment of which, after he had philanthropically peddled it through to the Indians across the line, he endeavored to repudiate. The condescending graciousness of deportment laid aside, Riel appeared in his true character of blood-thirsty ruffian and blustering mercenary bully. He scouted the idea of compromise, roared that what he asserted to be the little and almost frozen blood in McKay's veins, would very shortly be transferred from his body to a spoon which he picked up off the table. He told McKay he failed to understand the nature of their wants—they wanted blood, and they would make it pour—that he must have revenge for his fifteen long years of exile and of anguish that only blood could wipe that out, or money. Probably it was much the same sort of talk that he addressed to the Secretary of the N. W. Council, when his plausible utterances to that gentleman who visited him months ago were interrupted by a third party who contradicted him in order that he might lay bare to the Government official from Regina the true nature of his intentions in staying in the country. In order to carry out his amiable design upon McKay, who, probably, narrowly escaped the fate of Scott in Red River, he proceeded to put him on his trial, and was ably seconded by a kindred spirit Gabriel Dumont, whose only supposed redeeming quality of animal courage has become in consequence of his subsequent conduct on more than one occasion something more than questionable. This ruffian, more sanguinary than the Indians, whom, in days gone by he used to fight when leading the plain hunters after buffalo, was seated on an empty molasses keg, keeping up his own courage, and holding his fellow rebels in subjection by brandishing about a fourteen shooter. McKay was charged with having fired on the French in telling them that the English half-breeds would not support them in the lengths to which they were proceeding, and furthermore with having then come as a spy.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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